

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
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**ADAM B. SCHIFF**

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December 14, 2023

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
House Minority Leader  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chair  
House Appropriations Committee  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Vice Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-146  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell, Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chair Granger, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As Congress considers further action on the President’s National Security Supplemental request, we write to urge robust humanitarian aid for Armenia as it supports more than 100,000 refugees displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) by the unprovoked military attacks by Azerbaijan in September 2023, and up to 150,000 refugees in total since the 44 Day Conflict in 2020.

After systematically starving the people of Artsakh with a 10-months-long blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only road that connected Artsakh with the outside world, Azerbaijani forces launched a large-scale attack on Artsakh on September 19, resulting in at least 200 dead and 400 wounded, including children, women, and the elderly, and prompting nearly the entire population to flee for their lives. By the time a UN mission was sent—far too late—to review conditions on the ground, the team reported hearing that only “between 50 and 1,000 ethnic Armenians remain in the Karabakh region.” The majority of those refugees are now in Armenia, where they arrived in desperate condition and in need of aid, with the UN reporting many “undertook arduous journeys, often walking for days and finding shelter in caves or basements, enduring extremely challenging conditions.”<sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1141782>

The Armenian government has performed admirably to date, welcoming more than 100,000 refugees from Artsakh and implementing procedures to begin to incorporate them into society in Armenia. However, with a total population of just under 2.9 million people, Armenia's social services will be strained as it quickly absorbs this large influx of refugees. Significant additional resources from the international community and United States will be required to support refugees and receiving communities over the immediate-, medium-, and long-term. The \$11.5 million announced by Administrator Power on September 26<sup>[2]</sup> during her trip to Armenia and the additional \$4 million announced on November 21<sup>[3]</sup> is nowhere near sufficient. President Biden and Secretary Blinken have both rightly acknowledged, in a Statement of Administration Policy<sup>[4]</sup> and congressional testimony<sup>[5]</sup>, respectively, the need for additional aid to Armenia to support refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh as part of the \$9.15 billion of humanitarian assistance requested in the national security supplemental.

We understand the Armenian government has identified a need to allocate more than \$1.5 billion toward the long-term housing needs of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, but significant and sustained support from the international community and United States will be needed to address the short- and medium-term needs of refugees. We understand from on-the-ground assessments from by nongovernmental organizations that an estimated minimum of \$750 million in U.S. humanitarian aid will be required to adequately support employment, health care, education, social protection, rental and utility subsidies (over the next three years), and other refugee related programs. With the principle of burden sharing in refugee protection being a staple of the Refugee Convention and its subsequent Protocols since 1951,<sup>[6]</sup> we respectfully request that a minimum of \$750M in humanitarian aid be directed to Armenia as part of the national security supplemental package.

According to the demographic statistics provided by the Armenian government and the assessments of nongovernmental organizations working with refugees, Armenia will face a funding gap of almost \$2 Billion in the next 3-4 years as it attempts to protect and integrate the 150,000 refugees displaced from Nagorno Karabakh since 2020. The estimated funding gap includes but is not limited to the following: approximately \$150 million for the educational needs of 26,600 students (approximately 5,600 college and university students and 21,000 K-12 students); approximately \$110 million for food security of more than 100,000 refugees; approximately \$80 million in winterization assistance (cash assistance for vulnerable families to meet additional needs arising during the winter months and thermal blankets, plastic sheets, sleeping bags, and winter clothes) for 100,000 refugees; approximately \$160 million for healthcare needs of vulnerable refugee groups (40,000 children, women, elderly, and persons with disabilities); and, approximately \$450 million in short and medium-term housing (rental subsidies) for 25,000 households, until the Armenian government delivers a permanent housing solution for the 150,000 refugees.

The people of Artsakh arrived in Armenia already suffering from malnutrition and serious medical conditions due to the nearly year-long blockade and having experienced trauma as a result of events including the blockade, military attack, mass exodus, and three decades of conflict. There are significant immediate needs in terms of psychosocial support, medical care, and the provision of basics such as food, water, shelter, and clothing, particularly as winter approaches. The freezing temperatures will make the provision of adequate shelter and utilities critical. Over the longer-term, Armenia will need help to create and sustain jobs for these refugees, incorporate them into pensions systems, and help them settle in longer-term housing. In addition, it should be noted that more than half of the refugees are children and elderly persons who will also have special

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<sup>[2]</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/sep-26-2023-united-states-announces-more-115-million-humanitarian-assistance-south-caucasus-region>

<sup>[3]</sup> <https://twitter.com/PowerUSAID/status/1726952029812379761?s=20>

<sup>[4]</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Israel-Security-Supplemental-Appropriations-Act-SAP.pdf>

<sup>[5]</sup> [https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/download\\_testimony9.pdf](https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/download_testimony9.pdf)

<sup>[6]</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/media/convention-and-protocol-relating-status-refugees>

needs.<sup>[7]</sup> Amid these vast needs, the United States must lead the international community's burden sharing responsibility in assisting Armenia to ensure the protection and full integrating of refugees from Nagorno Karabakh. Helping Armenia to absorb and care for this population is imperative both morally and to ensure stability in the South Caucasus.

While the security and human rights situation in the South Caucasus remains complex, the United States must also continue to push for accountability for crimes committed in the context of Azerbaijan's unprovoked military attacks against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh since September 2020, take steps to deter future Azerbaijani aggression, and reaffirm support for Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Alleviating human suffering and meeting the urgent humanitarian needs of the refugees now in Armenia must be a top priority. The national security supplemental must include a robust level of U.S. humanitarian assistance for Armenia sufficient to address the scope of the challenge and demonstrate the U.S. commitment to Armenia's flourishing democracy, as the Armenian people continue to face unprovoked military aggression and threats of genocide at the hands of its autocratic neighbor.

We stand ready to work with you to advance additional humanitarian aid for Armenia and any other efforts to support the people of Armenia and Artsakh. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam B. Schiff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" and last name "Schiff" being clearly legible, and "B." in the middle.

Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress

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<sup>[7]</sup> <https://www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2023/support-armenia-in-overcoming-the-current-refugee-crisis-urges-osce-pa-migration-committee-chair>